

What would be the impact of pike in other places in California?

Pike prefer calm weedy areas that are relatively shallow. Young pike can find more aquatic insects in weedy areas, and find protection from being eaten by other fish. As they grow, pike one and two years old find the weed beds a good spot from which to pounce on their prey. Only when pike get quite large do they spend much time in open areas. Pike also like calm shallow weedy areas for spawning.

Pike have become a serious problem in environments that match these conditions. Many lakes and tributaries of the Susitna River watershed in southeastern Alaska once maintained native coho, chinook and sockeye salmon, rainbow trout, and arctic grayling. Today, these areas contain only northern pike, which were introduced to a lake far up in the watershed about 50 years ago.

In Ontario, Canada, pike have had a big impact on trout and salmon populations in colder, low-productivity lakes. In southern Arizona, shallow Parker Canyon reservoir is stocked with catchable rainbow trout, and also has a population of introduced pike. Nearly every pike examined over 16 inches long has a rainbow trout in stomach. By the end of the season, rainbow trout disappear from the pike diet until they are restocked the next spring. In Wisconsin, biologists have found that shallow lakes with lots of aquatic vegetation typically become full of "hammer-handle" pike, small and stunted after they have consumed the available prey.

California has a wide variety of habitats, from steep and quickly-flowing mountain streams and rivers to slow and meandering rivers in meadows and valleys. Although we have a few natural lakes, most of our surface waters are reservoirs behind dams on impounded rivers. In many places, pike take over and become the stunted "hammer-handles" described by Wisconsin biologist Terry Margeneau. In the Sacramento-San Joaquin delta, small native fishes rear their young in the very places that pike would like to inhabit. These fishes include the Sacramento splittail, Sacramento sucker and delta smelt. Also, the Delta is home to the young of spring-, fall- and winter-run Chinook salmon which would be vulnerable to the pike. The hungry and fast-growing northern pike could affect populations of these fish, and possibly contribute to them going extinct.



Catch a pike? Kill it and call 1-888-CALTip and leave a message, or call our office at (530) 832-9682. You can also turn the fish in to Grizzly Store at Lake Davis or Dollard's Sierra Market in Portola.

California Department of Fish and Game - Portola Field Office - 209 Commercial Street - P.O. Box 1858 - Portola, CA 96122 -
(530) 832-4067 - www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike